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THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER



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JOHN M. CARMODY, Administrator

WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

F. C. HARRINGTON, Commissioner

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CARL WATSON, State Administrator

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Writers' program. Ohio

THE ~~~~~**BEAUTIFUL** ~~~~~**RIVER**



COMPILED BY

WORKERS OF THE WRITERS' PROGRAM OF THE
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PREFATORY NOTE

THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER is an episode in the life story of the Ohio River. It begins with the Ohio living quietly after the tumult of the great glacier. As men settle the Ohio Valley, the river moves the wheels on the boats and beside the mills. It shapes cities and gives adventure until the railroads come and its muddy and diseased waters flood the Valley. The little book ends with men trying to control the Ohio and make it again a useful and beautiful river.

The Ohio unit of the Federal Writers' Project, directed by Dr. Harlan H. Hatcher, began this story; it was continued and brought forth in the form of this little book by the Ohio Writers' Project. Research for the manuscript came from the districts supervised by Robert M. Ross and Emerson Hansel. Helpful suggestions were contributed by officials of the Cincinnati Public Schools and of the Hamilton County Good Government League, represented by Judge John C. Dempsey.

The text was designed for use in the upper elementary and junior high school grades. The Ohio Writers' Project hopes that the children, as well as their parents, will complete the book with some understanding of how the life of a river enters the lives of men beside it.

HARRY GRAFF, State Supervisor
The Ohio Writers' Project

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH
BY COURTESY OF
PAUL BRIOL



THE VALLEY

Courtesy of the Cincinnati Enquirer



FROM PITTSBURGH TO CAIRO

THE Ohio," George Washington wrote in his diary in 1770, "is a remarkably crooked river." "The most beautiful river on earth," added Thomas Jefferson.

Although it has lost some of its beauty, the Ohio River is majestic as it twists and turns south and west in great curves a thousand miles from Pittsburgh to Cairo, Illinois. From Pittsburgh down past West Virginia on one side of the river and Ohio on the other, it flows between hills. Sometimes they roll down to the riverside, but usually they are back a little and the shore is low. Near Cincinnati the Ohio lies in a valley of farms and quiet towns squeezed between the river and the hills. Here orchards and garden patches and little fields of corn and tobacco run down to the water's edge, and back gates often open onto a river landing.

The Ohio is not an old river. Geologists, who know about soils and stones and rivers, say that its age is about 35 thousand years, which is young as rivers go. The land between the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachian Mountains was once covered with water, and the Gulf of Mexico reached all the way to the Great Lakes. Over a long period of time the land rose slowly above the water, and the water ran off to its present channel.

Then the glaciers came. They were thick sheets of ice moving heavily over the land. They ground up hills and rocks and soil as they shoved onward. Gradually the climate became warmer, and the glaciers melted backward. What is left of them is now far north of this country.

Most of the streams in the Ohio Valley had flowed northward. The glaciers made them run south and west. As the glaciers melted, their water broke down the land between several old streams, which became one wide river. This new stream was the Ohio.

So far as we know, the first people on the river were the mound builders. Hundreds of years ago they lived throughout the Ohio Valley. They piled up mounds of earth and stones. Some of these they used as burial places; others they used as forts; still others they used for ceremonial purposes. Although some of the mounds can still be seen along the river, most of them were plowed up a long time ago

by farmers, or disappeared when people built towns and cities on them. Much of what is now the downtown district of Cincinnati used to be covered with earthworks. Mound Street has its name because a high mound once stood near what is now the corner of Fifth and Mound Streets.

This mysterious people probably traveled on the Ohio River as far as it would take them on trips into the West. Some of the weapons and ornaments taken from their graves are made of semi-precious stones not native to this part of the country. They also worked with animal bones, and they had many strings and bands of tiny fresh-water pearls, taken from the mussels they dug from the sand bars of the Ohio and its tributaries.

The Indians we know about were the next people to live in the Ohio Valley. Some people say that the Indians called this river *Oyo*, "the great." Others assert that the Indians named the stream *Ohi-peek-hanne*, which means "very white, foaming." Perhaps it was so named because the swift currents which rode the river bends jumped into little white waves.

The Indians snared fish in the river, planted corn in the bottom lands, and tracked down game in the heavy forests. When the hunting was not so good on the north bank of the Ohio, they paddled across to Kentucky for their game. When the Indians had to move or visit or fight, they slid their canoes into the fast current of the river. Parties of Indians often came from as far north as Lake Erie to hunt in Kentucky. Their trail crossed the Ohio River at the site of Cincinnati, passed through what is now Covington, and went alongside the Licking River as it cut through the Kentucky hills.

The Indians walked this same long path for salt, which was hard to find in some parts of the region north of the Ohio. Salt-making expeditions would canoe down the Ohio River and follow the buffalo trails through the Kentucky wilds to a salt spring, called a "lick" because it was a place where the animals came to lick up the salt on the earth around the spring. Days would be spent filling kettles with salt water and boiling out the water until only the salt was left. Big Bone Lick, just down the river from Cincinnati in Boone County, Kentucky, was visited often by the Ohio tribes. It was not far from the Ohio River, so that most of the long trip could be made by canoe. Sometimes they continued all the way down to the Louisville falls by boat and then traveled many miles overland to get a big supply of salt.

Then white men entered the Ohio Valley. La Salle, the French explorer, is said to have discovered a river in 1669 which may have been the Ohio. We do know that other Frenchmen soon thereafter wandered

down the river and were amazed at the beauty of this new country. On each side of the beautiful river lay a woodland of low hills and broad valleys, which carried slender streams and creeks into the river. Sycamore, willow, swamp oak, and water maple trees were thick beside beds of high, green-leafed cane which came down to the edge of the banks. From the sides of the hills rose huge forests of poplar, oak, hickory, maple, ash, and smaller trees. Leaves drifting down from these trees made a cover for the soil when the snow came. Over all the hills and valleys and even on the steep slopes above the river, a network of big and little tree roots kept the soil from washing away. So the Ohio and its tributaries, even when they were high from rain and melted snow, were not muddy as they are today, but clear and pure. Seeing all this natural beauty, the Frenchmen called the river *La Belle Rivière*, which means "the beautiful river."

For many years after the visit of the French explorers, only a few white people, mostly French and English traders and fur-trappers, lived in the Ohio Valley. It did not take them long, however, to quarrel. The French group and the British group each wanted the rich forests, fields, and rivers for itself, and each tried to get the help of the Indians. The French claimed the land because of La Salle's explorations. The British claimed it by right of settlement. They pointed out that the Colonies on the Atlantic Coast were part of the British Empire, and that people from these Colonies had pushed westward over the Appalachian Mountains and built homes close to the streams in the Ohio Valley.

Meanwhile, in Europe, Britain and France started to war against each other. The fighting spread to this continent, and the French and British tried to drive each other out of the Ohio Valley. For seven years they battled, and then in 1763 the British won. They and the Indians ruled the Valley—but not for long. The American Revolutionary War came in 1775. When it was over, the Americans and the Indians were in the Ohio Valley, and each was determined to keep it.

During the Revolutionary War and immediately afterwards, people from Virginia and Pennsylvania settled on the Kentucky shore of the Ohio River. Some went down the Shenandoah Valley and through the Cumberland Gap to the bluegrass region; others followed the Cumberland River and the other southern tributaries of the Ohio. Still others went directly down the Ohio. By 1787 many white settlers were in Kentucky.

There were few people in the great region, extending from the Appalachians to the Mississippi and from the Ohio River to the Great Lakes, known as the Northwest Territory. The land was owned by

various Eastern States. One by one they gave to the United States their titles to the region, and the vast Northwest Territory soon belonged to the Federal Government. The new territory was more than a quarter-million square miles in area, and from it at a later date were carved Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and a part of Minnesota.

Here was the backyard of the new United States, the home of animals and Indians and a few white people, a great wilderness without roads—dangerous, lovely, profitable. Men in the East were eager to live in the Northwest Territory.

At first there were no laws for the new territory, so that people could not buy the land. Then, in 1787, a set of rules was drawn up and called the Ordinance of 1787. The Northwest Territory was now open for settlement.

The settlers came. In their way were tall mountains, tangled forests, and resentful Indians. But after they crossed the mountains they found a mighty friend—the Ohio River. It ran hundreds of miles along the southern border of the Northwest Territory; it carried many of them to their new homes.

DOWN TO THE SEA IN BOATS

THE people who settled Marietta, Columbia, and Losantiville (later Cincinnati), all of which were founded in 1788, came over the mountains in carts and wagons, but when they reached the Ohio River they built flatboats. They chopped down trees, then sawed them into planks thick and strong enough to stand the hard trip down the river. Since nails were expensive, the timbers were usually fitted together with wooden pegs cut by hand.

The flatboat was from 20 to 60 feet long and from 10 to 20 feet wide. In the center stood a cabin of thick, bullet-proof planks, with no openings in the sides except loopholes for rifles. A trap door and a window were in the roof. The cabin usually had a central hall, a bedroom, and a combination living-dining room. All the rooms were heated by a fireplace or by the crude stove used for cooking.

If all but an end of the boat was roofed, the vessel was called a Kentucky-boat. Most boats were without roofs. They were divided into compartments for cattle, tools, household furniture, and baggage.

The rectangular flatboat was usually steered by a pole as long as the boat itself, but one type of flatboat, the broadhorn, was guided by two huge sweeps or oars. Other types included the bateau, a broad, heavy boat for carrying big loads, and the galley, a wide skiff moved forward by heavy oars.

Although the river was a large friend to the settler, it sometimes caused a great deal of trouble. Boats might be snagged by hidden tree branches and floating logs, or caught in the sand bottom. There are many stories of boats crushed by ice cakes, and of others breaking loose from their moorings and running wild down the flooded river. One boat became lodged on a sandbar. The grown-ups had left two children aboard and had gone to see about moving the stranded vessel. The boat quickly swung off the bar and floated away with the children. The parents got into a canoe and paddled after it for many miles before they reached their frightened youngsters.

Indians were even more troublesome than the river. They felt that the only way to keep the Ohio Country to themselves was to drive away or kill the settlers. The Indians hid in the high cliffs and behind the trees along the upper Ohio. When a flatboat came too near the

shore, they slid into the boat and tomahawked the settlers. The Indians were very clever at concealing themselves on the banks of the river. So when a boat swung close to the shore—even if for only a moment—the Indians could leap from their hiding place and climb on board the flatboat almost before the pioneer had time to reach for his rifle.

In this manner a family named Hubbel was attacked. While the men were busy fighting the Indians, the women hid their children in the cabin and told them to be quiet or the Indians would steal them. One of the little boys was given his baby sister to hold. Suddenly an arrow pierced the cabin wall and stuck in his arm. He made no sound, and kept holding the baby until someone ran to help him.

Quite often the Indians tricked the pioneers. They pretended to be white men lost in the woods, and yelled between the palms of their hands. Or else they imitated the call of wild turkeys or other game birds which the men on the boat would like to have for food. In either case, the pioneers would of course steer their boats to shore. Then a band of painted, screaming Indians would jump from among the trees and try to rush the boat. Sometimes such attempts were successful, but often they were not, for the pioneers were well-armed and even the women and girls knew how to use the rifle.

After 1794, when the Indians had been subdued by “Mad” Anthony Wayne, the journey down the Ohio was much less dangerous. The ark, which had been easy prey for the Indians because it was slow and clumsy, now became popular on the river. It was usually between 40 and 50 feet long and about one-third as wide, and it was steered and

QUIET WATER

Courtesy of the Cincinnati Enquirer



propelled by oars. Its prow and stern were a blunt V in shape. Only a part of the ark was roofed to protect travelers from the weather; the rest, usually reserved for livestock, was open. When it was filled with a cargo of noisy farm animals, the boat probably looked like Noah's ark.

When danger no longer lurked in the forests, the pioneers pushed up the Ohio's tributaries. They cleared the fertile river valleys and planted corn and wheat and flax. Soon the flatboats on the little rivers were bearing loads of farm produce to the towns on the Ohio.

Farmers living upstream needed the tools and furniture which could be bought in Cincinnati. But the upstream journey in the heavy boats was hard, slow, and expensive. Other types of river craft were therefore invented. Their model was the narrow-bottomed Indian canoe. Because the birch tree did not grow so far south, the canoe of the Ohio Indian was never like Hiawatha's—of birchbark and boughs. Instead it was a canoe-shaped dugout, made by hollowing out a large tree trunk.

The Ohio white men used dugouts. Although they were good for travel to town, however, the dugouts were too small to carry profitable loads of crops. So the pioneer farmers made dugouts of the biggest trees they could find—of oak and poplar—and called them pirogues. They were fifty feet long and six or eight feet wide, went swiftly downstream, and through hard work could be rowed upstream. When the spring freshets came, they were dangerous because they tipped over easily and lost all their cargo.

The keelboat was the first boat on the inland waters of America designed to be used for commerce. It was 60 to 70 feet long and had a narrow bottom and a prow curved like that of a canoe. Running the length of the bottom was a heavy piece of wood called the keel. It was strong enough to take knocks and bumps without cracking or breaking. Freight was carried in the "cargo box," which was much like a ship's hold. Sails were sometimes hoisted on the keelboat, but the wind rarely filled them. And even when it did, the currents were much stronger than the wind.

Bringing a large, heavily laden keelboat upriver required twice as many men as the downriver trip. As a rule many men who worked their way up the river on keelboats had come down it on flatboats. They had taken cargoes down river to their destination, then knocked the boats to pieces and sold the planking. Not wanting to walk home cross-country from New Orleans and other southern ports, many of them took jobs as keelboatmen on craft bound up the river.

"Cordelling" was a good way of taking a keelboat upstream, especially on the lower Mississippi. From the center of the keelboat rose

a strong thirty-foot mast. To this was fastened the cordelle, a rope often more than 300 yards long, which reached to the hands of keelboatmen on the bank. It kept the boat a safe distance from shore. The high mast lifted the rope well above the brush and smaller trees on the river's edge. Walking in single file with the line over their shoulders, the keelboatmen pulled the craft up the river, just as years later mules dragged the canal boats through the canal.

In places where cordelling was impractical, the keelboats were "warped" upriver. In warping a boat, the men on shore walked ahead and tied the rope to a tree. The men on board then heaved on the line until the boat was abreast the tree. Then the rope was untied, carried ahead, fastened to another tree, and pulled again.

Whenever the water was shallow, the boat was "poled" against the sandy bottom of the Ohio. The crew divided into two single-file lines, one line on each runway by the cargo box. Each man held an ironshod pole and faced astern. At the command, "Set poles!" the boatmen plunged their poles into the river bed. As the captain roared "Back her!" they threw their weight against the poles and walked toward the stern, forcing the boat against the current. As each boatman reached the stern he jerked his pole from the river bed and hurried back to the bow to take his place in line. This procedure was kept up day after day until the boat reached its goal.

Sometimes the keelboats got stuck in the mud and sand. Then the keelboatmen had to unload the cargo and carry it on their backs up river until the water was deep enough to support a heavily stocked boat. In places the shallow water extended for miles, so that the men could not carry the cargo. In such cases, they swung pick and shovel and, working in water up to their knees, dug the channel deeper. Now and then the water got so low that they had to camp on the river bank for hours or days or even weeks, waiting for the water to rise.

Life on a keelboat was hard. Unruly slaves on Southern plantations trembled and promised to be good when their masters threatened to sell them to a keelboat owner. The keelboatmen were brawny young white men who worked hard for 50 cents a day and led a rough-and-tumble life. They were happy and carefree, and big enough to cope with river troubles.

Just as there are countless stories, some tall, some true, of the early lumbermen, hunters, and Indian fighters, so are there tales of the keelboatmen. Greatest of them, now half-mythical, was Mike Fink. He was the hardest drinker and the deadliest rifle shot, the strongest and bravest keelboatmen "on both sides the river from Pittsburgh to

New Orleans and back again to St. Louis." He could shoot tin cups from the heads of his companions, and work or play 24 hours at a stretch. He never shirked his job or broke a promise. If a sheriff ever came looking for Mike Fink, nobody seemed to know a thing about him, for he was feared along the entire length of the river.

Even river pirates avoided Mike Fink and his fellow keelboatmen. They preferred to get their loot easily by boarding stalled flatboats. If the cargo was rich enough and they outnumbered the men on board, they even dared attack and kill the crew. They would then take the boat on down to New Orleans themselves and sell the cargo.

The river pirates had headquarters at several places along the Ohio. One band hung out at Cave-in-Rock, on the Ohio near Shawneetown, Illinois. When boatmen neared Cave-in-Rock, they worked as hard as they could until they were safely past. They were joyful when they glimpsed the broad mouth of the Ohio at Cairo, Illinois.

Boats plying the Mississippi had an extra load of trouble. The moment they left the Ohio River and entered the Mississippi, they were in Spanish territory. Spain was not friendly to the United States. It owned Florida and the vast Louisiana territory; it controlled the Mississippi. A thriving river trade would, year by year, draw more American settlers to the Ohio and the Mississippi. Eventually, the Spaniards thought, the American colonists would cross the Mississippi and take Spanish land.

To discourage trade and hold back the settlers, Spain had threatened to close the Mississippi River to American boats. Then in 1795 President Washington made a treaty with Spain which guaranteed Americans the right to travel on the Mississippi and ship their goods into New Orleans.

The treaty did not help the United States very much. Only the port of New Orleans itself was open to trade, and Americans paid a high tariff on goods they brought there.

In 1802 the United States learned that Spain by a secret treaty in 1800 had given its Louisiana and Florida territory to France. It had been dangerous enough having Spain a neighbor of the United States. Everyone now felt that Napoleon, Emperor of the French, was an even greater threat.

President Jefferson thought that any nation which controlled the Mississippi River was a natural enemy of the United States. He knew that as the years passed the people of the Ohio Valley would have

more and more goods to sell, and that the Nation needed a free and convenient seaport through which merchandise could be shipped.

Jefferson decided that, instead of warring with France, the United States should buy the port of New Orleans and a strip of land adjoining the Mississippi River. Fortunately for the United States, Napoleon needed money for his European campaigns. Despite his promise to Spain that he would hold onto his American territories, Napoleon offered to sell not merely what President Jefferson had asked for, but all of France's holdings in North America. Although Jefferson was not certain that he had the authority to purchase the land, he lost little time pondering. In 1803 he bought the French territory for the United States for only \$15,000,000.



SMOKE ON THE RIVER

THE Louisiana Purchase brought great rejoicing to the people along the Ohio and its tributaries. Shippers and keelboatmen no longer had to risk their cargo, traders would not have to suffer fines and imprisonment for dealing in Louisiana, and there were no more Spanish duties or taxes to pay.

Easterners were less enthusiastic. The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the United States, and the Easterners wanted to know just what the Government would ever do with so much territory. The land west of the Mississippi, they said, could never be anything more than a wilderness. It was too far away; people would never settle there; it would never have anything but wild animals and wilder Indians—so the people of the East argued.

In spite of all they said, many of them went west to clear the land and plant crops for the profitable trade in the new territory. They pushed westward into the land beyond the Mississippi, and chopped down oak, maple, poplar, and hickory forests to plant fields of flax and wheat and corn.

In the older Southern States, such as Virginia and the Carolinas, the cotton land was being worn out by careless farming. Now that the cotton growers were certain they could sell their cotton in New Orleans, they, too, went west into Arkansas and Alabama and Louisiana. They cleared acres of forest to make room for cotton.

The many new people in the South and West were customers for the goods of the Ohio Valley, and they in turn shipped produce to the valley towns.

So large was the traffic on the river that men tried to invent new boats to lessen the cost of manpower and thus make even greater profits. In 1803 paddle-propelled boats appeared on the Mississippi. The hull was like that of a keelboat, and the boat was powered by horses walking a treadmill on board the boat. These horse-boats were complete failures; the horses could not do the work of the keelboatmen. Tired horses collapsed in harness faster than fresh horses could be found.

There were other new kinds of boats, but none was so good as the old keelboat. So Mike Fink and his cronies bent over with laughter

when they heard that a man was going up and down the river asking rivermen if they thought the Ohio and the Mississippi would do for steamboat travel. Always they shouted "No," and jeered at the crazy notion. True, they had heard that a man named Fulton had made a contraption called a steamboat which was running on Eastern waters, but such a boat, they said, could never buck the stiff currents and swift floods of the Mississippi and the Ohio. The keelboatmen said that only good hard muscle could bring goods upstream.

The man who had asked the questions up and down the river in 1809 was not discouraged. His name was Nicholas J. Roosevelt, and he worked for Fulton and Livingston, steamboat builders and operators in New York. He investigated the channels and currents, and questioned people on boats and in the river towns. Everywhere they laughed in his face or politely smiled and shook their heads. They laughed even louder when they heard that Roosevelt had arranged to have supplies of wood and coal at points along the river—supplies of fuel to be used to make steam in a boat not yet built.

The year 1811 was a year of wonders in the river valleys. The Great Comet moved like a fiery serpent across the sky. People trembled and prayed, for they thought it meant the end of the world. There were Indian uprisings in Indiana. The Mississippi raged and the earth trembled.

Among these awful happenings Nicholas J. Roosevelt came down the Ohio again in October 1811. He was the proud captain of the steamboat built under his supervision at Pittsburgh. Few of the scoffers who lined the banks of the Ohio to see the ungainly contraption would have believed that here was the beginning of Cincinnati's greatness as a shipping center. To most of the folk along the river the *Orleans* was nothing more than another wonder in a year of wonders, good only for scaring cattle and farmer lads. It was an ugly, noisy thing, chugging and sputtering, paddling up white foam, puffing up black smoke.

The *Orleans* stopped at Cincinnati long enough to refuel, and most of the town turned out to see it. Keelboatmen and others who knew the river laughed and ridiculed. Almost anything, even a log raft, they yelled, would go down river, but it took men, real men, to bring a load up river.

The *Orleans* steamed on down the Ohio to Louisville. It arrived at midnight, with such a noise and hissing of steam that the townspeople jumped from their beds and hurried to see whether the comet had fallen from the sky into the river.

THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER

The autumn rains were late that year, so that even in October the river was too low for the steamboat to travel beyond the falls at Louisville. While waiting for the water to rise, Captain Roosevelt had a chance to show what the *Orleans* could do. He steamed back and forth between Cincinnati and Louisville. The most skeptical people now had to admit that the steamboat could go upstream as well as down.

An earthquake came in December, shook down chimneys in Cincinnati, and made the Ohio and the Mississippi splash like oceans. The *Orleans*, tied up at Louisville, bobbed safely through the earthquake, but many keelboats and flatboats went under, losing their cargoes and a number of their men.

The Mississippi was especially terrifying just below the mouth of the Ohio. Here the earth rose and sank, forcing the waters backward and over the land. When the earthquake stopped, tall trees were under water and there was a new lake in Tennessee and Kentucky. It extended for several miles on the eastern side of the Mississippi River. Today it is known as Reelfoot Lake.

The *Orleans* had steamed on down the Mississippi from Louisville. Its supply of coal was exhausted, so that each afternoon the crew went ashore to cut wood for the boilers. It was nervous work, for the earth grumbled and fussed beneath them. Some people along the way ran in terror from the strange, smoking boat on the river. Others, who had a greater fear of the violent earth, begged to be taken aboard.

Courtesy of the Cincinnati Public Library

RIVER NEIGHBORS



When Livingston and Fulton, owners of the company for which Captain Roosevelt worked, saw that a steamboat could navigate the Mississippi, they established a freight route from Natchez to New Orleans, and built two more boats, the *Hecla* and the *Etna*, to carry merchandise.

The *Orleans* sank in 1814, but two years later Fulton and Livingston salvaged its engine and put it in the *New Orleans*. When this ship stopped at Cincinnati on its first voyage, the newspapers took sharp notice. After watching the new steamboat tie up at the Public Landing, the editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette* remarked:

The steamboat *New Orleans* came to anchor before this port on Monday last. This is a large and handsome vessel, burthen 350 tons, intended for the trade of the Mississippi and will probably, now that the path has been successfully chalked out by the *Etna*, often pay her acceptable visits at Louisville. We do not envy our friends at Louisville the advantages they enjoy over us, we only regret *our* legislature has not yet caught the spirit of theirs.

Steamboating did not develop as quickly as it might have because of the Livingston Company. The Louisiana Territorial legislature had granted this firm the exclusive right to use steamboats on the rivers of that territory. The operation of steamboats was thereby made unprofitable to anyone else. There was little to be gained in bringing freight down to the Louisiana border and transferring it to a Livingston vessel, which would take it into New Orleans, sell it, and make all the money.

The rivermen and traders felt that such an arrangement was unfair. They believed that the Mississippi River should be like a public highway, open to every one who wished to use it.

Captain Henry Miller Shreve thought so too. He was so strong in his conviction that he went down to New Orleans in his good ship *Enterprise*. This was, of course, against the law, because the boat did not belong to Fulton and Livingston. The captain was arrested. He was not surprised. In fact, he had already hired an able New Orleans lawyer. He and his boat were soon released.

Fulton and Livingston were furious. They hired all the remaining lawyers in New Orleans, and even tried to bribe Captain Shreve's lawyer into betraying him. Fulton and Livingston and all their lawyers failed to get Captain Shreve punished; so in 1816 they took the case to court. The decision handed down was that rivers should be free to all men.

The Livingston Company ignored the ruling and had Captain Shreve arrested again when he later came down the river in the steam-

boat *Washington*. This time the shrewd captain did nothing. He just sat. He knew what people up and down the river were thinking. They believed that the river should be free. When they heard that he had been seized again, this time for something which was no longer against the law, there was such a public demonstration that he was soon released. The monopolists then had to pay him for the trouble they had caused.

The Livingston and Fulton Company had another steamboat monopoly in New York; no Ohio-built boats were allowed on the lakes or rivers which touched that State. While Captain Shreve was fighting in New Orleans for the freedom of the Mississippi, the Ohio legislature was protesting the Livingston monopoly in New York. In 1822 the Ohio legislature closed its Lake Erie ports to the Livingston and Fulton boats, until New York ports were opened to Ohio-built boats. This question was carried to the Supreme Court of the United States by Daniel Webster.

The verdict, pronounced by Chief Justice John Marshall, was that the navigable rivers, lakes, and streams of the United States should not be controlled by any of the States, but by the United States as a whole. Thus boats, regardless of where or by whom they were built, could travel on any river or lake in this country.



BALES AND BARRELS

CINCINNATI traders had been making money in spite of the monopoly. In 1813 a Cincinnati named Carter wrote that his son who was engaged in river trade would "clear in eight months four thousand dollars." The same writer told of "one New England man who came here six years ago with \$33, traded to New Orleans, and is now worth ten thousand dollars in cash." The cargo the traders took down the river was flour, pork, and whisky; the return load from New Orleans was sugar, cotton, coffee, and rice. Men reaped fortunes from the Cincinnati-New Orleans trade.

Other men made a good living by operating floating grocery stores, or bumboats, which peddled to the villagers and farmers along the Ohio and smaller rivers.

Most of the traveling storekeepers would buy their stock of dry-goods and groceries in Cincinnati, then set out in the spring when the river was full enough to float heavy loads. The trader went only to the villages not large enough to support a general store the year around. As he drew near the bank, he sounded a mighty blast on a horn. No sooner did he touch the landing than bonneted women and girls rushed aboard.

As they fingered the wares and bargained, they asked the storekeeper for news. The keeper of the bumboat was often the only contact the backwoods river villages had with the outside world; he was trader, entertainer, and traveling newspaper. Often the people with whom he traded had no cash; he would then accept such country produce as flour, bacon, whisky, cheese, butter, or eggs. Since the flatboat attempted to supply everything which a settler might need, whether a needle or an anchor, the country produce was usually welcomed. It was possible that in another settlement a few miles farther down the river there might be a shortage of eggs or something else.

Other boats which served the river farms and villages were those of blacksmiths who shod horses and mules, and made iron wagon tires and farm tools on their boats. There were furniture makers and upholsterers, and in later days there were even sawyers on great flatboats carrying sawmills to cut lumber for new houses in the growing towns of the Valley.



From an old print

BUSY PORT

Cincinnati grew with the river trade. It changed from a log cabin village, straggling along a few muddy roads, to a brisk little town with its face turned to the river. From the creek and river valleys on the north, waddled hogs by the hundreds into Cincinnati, shaking up dust and making noise all the way to the slaughterhouses. Into the town from the outlying farmlands also creaked great wagons heavy with corn, wheat, beef, flax, wool, hides, furs, ginseng, tobacco, and handmade linsey-woolsey jeans and socks and mittens. Down the two Miamis and down the Licking (in Kentucky) came heavily loaded boats to Cincinnati.

Some of this produce was used in Cincinnati, but most of it was shipped south to plantations and towns along the Mississippi. At New Orleans a great part of it was put on ocean-going vessels bound for American cities along the Atlantic and also for countries on the other side of the ocean.

As the steamboat replaced most of the manpowered craft, steamboat building became an important industry. Steamboats were hammered together by the score each year. Sometimes several boats were launched in a single day.

As steamboats became more numerous, goods could be transported more quickly and cheaply up and down the rivers. More and more families came to live in the Valley. Immigrants, especially from Germany and Ireland, thronged to Cincinnati.

Greater now than ever before was the demand for the produce of Ohio farmers. Every year more acres were planted in corn and wheat, more hogs and sheep and cattle fattened.

In pioneer days Ohio farmers had learned that a hog could be driven to market over any kind of land in all kinds of weather. So, instead of hauling corn to market, farmers within a radius of 150 miles drove their corn-fed hogs into Cincinnati to be slaughtered. By 1825, because of Cincinnati's packing industries, Easterners had nicknamed the city "Porkopolis." The Public Landing was piled high with hogsheads of salt pork to be shipped south. Barrels of spareribs could be had at the packing houses for the asking, and other parts of the hog were cheap almost beyond belief.

Hogs could eat only so much farm produce. The inland farmer scarcely knew what to do with the rest. Roads were still crude and there were no railroads. The richest part of Ohio, the western section, had few navigable streams. There was no good way of getting farm produce to the town market.

City business men were as eager as the farmer to find a way of bringing farm crops to market. When the farmer prospered, the whole town profited; the more he sold, the more he was able to buy.

The people of Ohio looked about for some solution to the problem. They found the answer in New York and other Eastern States, where canals had been dug. Freight and passengers were carried over the canals on barges drawn by horses on the towpaths.

Urged by an eager public, the Ohio legislature voted money for the building of canals through Ohio. Work on the Miami and Erie Canal, which ran from the Ohio River at Cincinnati to Lake Erie at Toledo, was begun in 1825. Although the canal took 20 years to complete, only a few years elapsed before farmers a short distance north of Cincinnati began to use the southern portion. Barge loads of farm produce, pulled by horses and mules sweating on the hard-beaten towpath, soon arrived in the city. And barges piled with farm machinery, furniture, sugar, and coffee left Cincinnati for up-state communities and farms.

The canals made men realize the possibilities of the little rivers—Ohio River tributaries, not only in Ohio, but also in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. Down these to the Ohio came lumber, coal, iron ore, farm produce, furs, game, and raw materials for manufacture or for trans-shipment down the Mississippi. Back up the little rivers went manufactured goods and other things which the people inland could not make or grow for themselves. The Ohio River banded a multitude of people and products together, and placed the goods of Europe and India within reach of Ohio farmers. A traveler who came to Cincinnati

almost a hundred years ago marveled, "When a boat came to the landing it seemed as if all the world were there."

Cincinnati became Queen City of the West, greatest of the inland river towns. At its landing every kind of farm produce and manufactured article was being loaded or unloaded, while rivermen, laborers, and passengers mingled, some departing, others arriving, others merely looking on or strolling by in the bedlam of the busiest, most colorful port between Pittsburgh and New Orleans.

The big hotels were near the landing—so near that when the Gibson House was opened at its present location in 1849, many people thought it was too far from the river. Front and Pearl Streets were not lined with warehouses as they are today, but filled with hotels, shops, factories, and saloons.

All kinds of people mingled on the streets, in the restaurants and hotels, and at the Public Landing: rich Southern planters in high beaver hats, with their families, attended by a retinue of slaves; sunburned farmers from Ohio and Kentucky; Irish and German immigrants fresh from the Old Country, still wearing their native dress and speaking their native tongue or brogue; swaggering steamboat captains; and wide-shouldered river men. Roustabouts tugged at bales of cotton and hogsheads of pork and tobacco; they rolled barrels of flour, meal, sugar, coffee, molasses, salt, fish, fruits, and all the other produce of the South down the gangplanks. Teamsters swore and lashed the horses and mules hauling merchandise from the landing.

Crowds of carriages, carts, and wagons rattled over the cobblestone streets down to the landing. Some brought food supplies to be used on the steamboats, or freight to be shipped down river. Others carried passengers to the boats.

Down to the river there came also a multitude of men who made special parts for the paddle-wheelers. They manufactured engines, steamboat furniture, and fittings. The work of repairing and repainting the boats kept others busy, while many more were needed to supply rope, anchors, fuel, and food for the passengers and crews of the hundreds of boats that docked at Cincinnati.



RACING PALACES

SO it was that the steamboat became queen of the river, ordering the lives of the people in the Valley. By 1850 few flatboats, keelboats, or other manpower boats rode the waters of the Ohio. They had been replaced by the steamboat, which had been improved so rapidly that it was hardly to be compared with the one that Captain Nicholas Roosevelt had introduced in 1811.

The early steamboat had little regard for schedule; it began its trip whenever the captain saw fit. Judge James Hall, Cincinnati historian and novelist, upon one occasion rushed from his hotel without his breakfast in order to catch a steamboat scheduled to leave port at eight o'clock, then had to wait three days on board before the boat actually started. Indignantly he wrote:

During the whole first day, passengers continued to come on board, puffing and blowing—in the most eager haste to secure passage—each having been assured by the captain or agent that the boat would start in *less than* an hour. The next day presented the same scene; the rain continued to fall; we were two miles from the city, lying against a miry bank which prevented anyone from leaving the boat. . . . Bye and bye the captain came—but then we must wait a few minutes for the clerk, and when the clerk came, the captain found that he must go to town. In the meanwhile passengers continued to accumulate, each decoyed alike by the assurance that the boat was about to depart. Thus we were detained until the *third day*, when the cabin and deck being crowded with a collection nearly as miscellaneous as the crew of Noah's Ark, the captain thought it proper to proceed on his voyage.

Once it got under way, the pioneer steamboat was dangerous and uncomfortable. All passengers were accommodated in a spacious saloon with separate compartments for men and women. The cabins were poorly lighted by oil lamps, which sometimes set fire to the boat. The fuel used to keep up the steam in the boilers was wood or soft coal. On days when the wind blew in the wrong direction the passengers were showered with soot, ashes, and cinders.

When the river was low, boats had to wait for it to rise. The passengers could fish, stroll over the countryside, amuse themselves aboard with eating, drinking, and dancing, or listen to the captain rant at the delay. The passage included board and lodging between points on the river for as long as the journey took. During the tie-ups the captain often complained that the passengers ate him out of his profits.

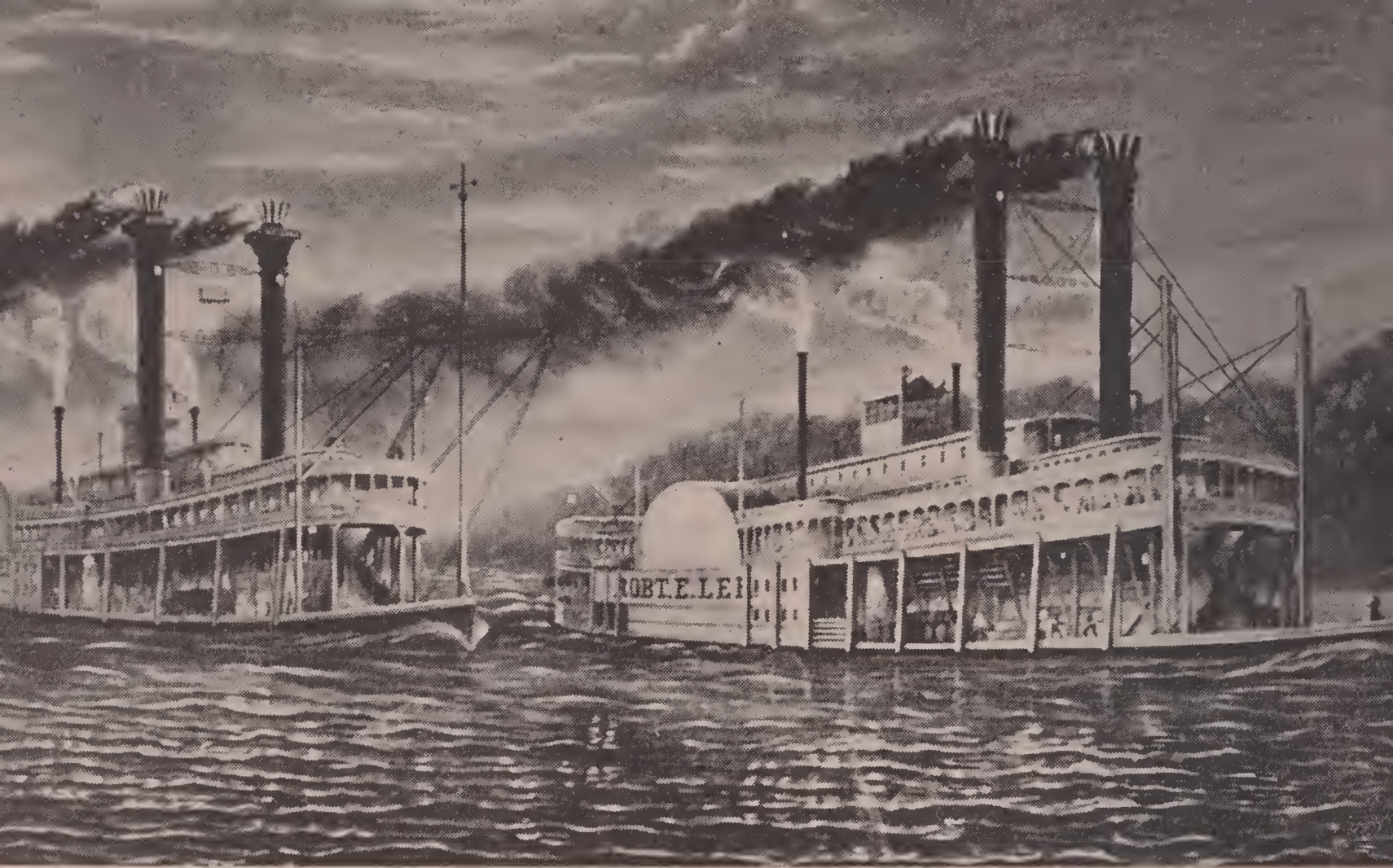
Such conditions did not last long. As more steamboats were built, competition became keener. To secure passengers each boat tried to outdo the others in comfort, good food, and speed. Many were adorned, inside and out, with oil paintings, sometimes of Biblical scenes. The steam calliope catered to other tastes by blowing gay tunes for the passengers. The chandeliers in these "floating palaces," says Mark Twain, "were each an April shower of glittering glass drops."

Every captain prided himself on the gadgets of his boat, such as whistle and bells unlike any others on the river. One captain came to see his bell cast in a Cincinnati foundry, and threw 500 silver dollars into the melting pot to insure a clear, pure tone. Often the bells were prized more highly than the engines; if a boat sank, a diver was sent to the river bottom to get the bells.

In later days, when steamboats ran according to schedule, people living miles back in the hills above the river set their clocks by the long wailing of some steamboat whistle as the boat came round a bend in the river. Steamboats were always coming and going, their deep-toned whistles sounding for a bend or a fog or a landing, their bells ringing, their engines roaring, their great wheels splashing, and their tall smokestacks pouring black smoke.

The engines were not so powerful as those of today. They consumed a great deal of fuel, so that boats had to stop frequently to refuel with coal or wood. To get the greatest amount of power it was necessary to have the smokestack as high as possible, so that there would be a strong draft in the firebox. Therefore, until bridges were swung across the Ohio, stacks were often more than 50 feet high.

There were no beacon lights on shore to guide the boat, no buoys in the river to warn of shoals, no navigation laws. Captain and crew, always eager to make speed, were sometimes careless. As a rule the fastest boats got most of the passengers and freight, so that boats were built for speed, not for safety or long use. There was always the danger that a snag or a rock would crush the flimsy hull and sink the steamer. Boilers were flimsily built. Some were equipped with safety valves so the steam could escape when the pressure became dangerously high. But they were often tied down when a race was on or the captain was in a hurry. As a result, boilers often blew up.



FULL STEAM

From the Currier & Ives Print

Because of all these hazards, steamboat accidents were usually disastrous. The *Moselle* was a Cincinnati-built vessel noted up and down the river for beauty and speed. No vessel could beat her on the run to St. Louis. On April 25, 1838, the captain of a rival boat steamed down river boasting that he would break the record of the *Moselle* to St. Louis. The captain of the *Moselle* was in no humor to let this happen. He gave orders for full steam ahead.

Awaiting the steamer about two miles up river from Cincinnati was a large party of German immigrants who had made arrangements to go to St. Louis. When the ship stopped to pick them up, one of the passengers, an engineer who had come aboard at the Cincinnati wharf, went down to have a look at the engine room. He came on deck soon after and immediately left the boat, remarking to some of the crew that the boilers could never hold up under such a terrific pressure of steam.

No one heeded the frightened engineer. Instead, the crew worked swiftly getting the passengers and freight aboard, and the vessel was soon ready to start. The fires below deck raged and the boilers hissed, but no one cared. Everybody was eager for the race down river. As the boat backed away from the landing, cries of farewell and good luck came from friends on shore. Then all four boilers blew up at once. The big boat was torn to pieces.

Of some 300 passengers, about 200 were killed. Some of the dead were past recognition: 19 unidentified bodies were buried at public expense in a common grave.

Everyone was so shocked at this tragedy that the Federal Government appointed officers to inspect boats and enforce safety regulations. The inspectors did some good, but they could not prevent all accidents. After a visit to Cincinnati in 1842, Charles Dickens, the author of *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and many other books, commented that two or three steamboat disasters in a week were not uncommon.

These wrecked steamboats were replaced quickly; just before the Civil War 600 steamboats were busy on the river all the time. For the people were river-minded and by no means timid. The passengers were often just as enthusiastic as the captain and the crew over the outcome of a race. When a contest was on, anything that would make a hot fire was thrown into the fireboxes—rosin, pinewood, turpentine, and even oil. A legend tells of passengers so eager to win a race that they offered to pay the captain for the cargo if he would burn it. He did, and won the race. The cargo that went up in smoke was ham—thousands of smoked hams!

Sometimes races covered more than a thousand miles; boats and crew strained for days to win by a boat-length or less. The greatest race of all happened in 1870 when the *Natchez*, a Cincinnati-built boat, and the *Robert E. Lee* ran up river. The course was the 1,218-mile stretch of the Mississippi River between New Orleans and St. Louis.

Newspapers all over the United States discussed the race, just as they now talk about the Kentucky Derby or the World Series. During the race, people crowded the shores of the Mississippi waiting for a sight of the two paddle-wheelers as they drove up river at full steam. At night, torches blazed along the banks wherever the lights of the boats twinkled on the dark river. Although the boats did not pass their city, Cincinnatians were especially eager to know of its outcome. They had bet large sums on the Cincinnati boat, *Natchez*.

Gradually, as the boats drew on up the Mississippi, the *Robert E. Lee* pulled ahead and reached St. Louis in 3 days, 18 hours, and 14 minutes—6 hours and 36 minutes ahead of the *Natchez*.

Although the *Natchez* had been beaten fairly, many Cincinnatians argued that it was the faster boat. The *Robert E. Lee*, they pointed out, had taken on fuel and supplies without stopping, whereas the *Natchez* had spent 7 hours and 1 minute in refueling. Regardless of how it was gained, the record of the *Robert E. Lee* was unbroken for many years.



HIGH WATER, LOW WATER

THE boat races were exciting, but they indicated that the river was not so useful as it had once been. The Ohio and its tributaries had changed much since the day when the first flatboat came slowly past the deep forest and tall canebrake. Factories, warehouses, homes, and cornstalks stood where the forest and canebrake had been.

River traffic soon dwindled and people lost interest in the Ohio. They came to think of it mainly as a place into which they could dump sewage and waste materials from their factories. They kept cutting down the trees and clearing away the undergrowth along the banks of the Ohio and its tributaries. Soon the beautiful river grew tawny and changed into a monster. It raised its back, climbed up the banks, and ran wild over the countryside, destroying the homes of the people who lived in the river towns.

The Ohio River had flooded often—even in the first years of settlement. But there had been no great floods until 1832 when the flood crest at Cincinnati was more than 64 feet—14 feet above the danger line. After that the Ohio River came into Cincinnati once every four or five years.

In 1883 the record of the 1832 flood was broken: the Ohio River surged up to 66 feet. Cincinnatians were stunned. No one had thought that the river could possibly reach such a height. Thousands of homes and more than 1,500 business places were flooded. The following year (1884) the river heaved to more than 71 feet, destroying more than 5,000 homes, hundreds of business houses, and 10 lives.

The next great flood followed the heavy March rains of 1913. It caused 400 deaths and \$100,000,000 of property damage. Greatest destruction of life and property was along the Great Miami, the big tributary that empties into the Ohio River a few miles down river from Cincinnati. The flood that it caused in Dayton was one of the most disastrous in the history of the Nation.

Within the following two decades there came other floods, but none of them was so destructive as those of 1884 and 1913. Hardly anyone expected the river to do so much damage again. So in mid-January 1937 when the Ohio rose suddenly, no one was frightened. "It will go down soon—as it always does," everyone said.



*Courtesy of the Air Corps,
United States Army*

FLOOD
CINCINNATI
JANUARY
1937

But the river did not go down. It kept rising until it had driven thousands of people from their homes in Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Steubenville, Marietta, Portsmouth, Maysville, Newport, Covington, Louisville, Evansville—cities and towns along the Ohio down to Cairo, cities and towns along the Mississippi down to New Orleans.

It flooded one-sixth of Cincinnati. The city water supply was turned off and people had to get drinking water from wells, springs, and tank cars. On Sunday night, January 24, the Columbia power plant was forced to shut down and the city was in total darkness. In Cummins-ville the flood waters overturned huge oil tanks. In a short time a section of the city three miles long and one-half mile wide was on fire. On January 25, the City Council gave City Manager Clarence A. Dykstra full power to rule the city during the emergency. Before the river started to drop from its 80-foot crest at Cincinnati, millions of dollars in property had been destroyed.

The flood revealed a wonderful spirit of cooperation. The Red Cross was in general charge. It spent nearly one and a half million dollars on relief in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. At Music Hall was a supply depot where on some days as many as 100 thousand garments were distributed. Dry cleaning concerns volunteered their services. Three thousand Boy Scouts were on duty. The public schools were closed, and the teachers volunteered for relief work. The Cincinnati Board of Education offered school buildings to the Red Cross for use as refugee centers, where those driven from their homes could be fed and quartered. As a result of the 1937 flood experience the Board of Education has worked out a schedule of building facilities for any future emergency which may occur.

After the flood had subsided, the Valley people tried to resume their work calmly. At the same time they began to ask, "What can be done about these floods? The next flood may be greater than this. The water may go to 90 or even 100 feet."

Floods cannot be controlled in a short time. They are started by melting snows and by heavy rains beating down upon the bare earth. This causes hundreds of small, muddy streams to race to the big rivers and pour water over the land. Nothing, of course, can keep the snows from melting or the rain from falling, but they would not be disastrous if many plants grew on the land drained by the rivers. Trees and grass would hold the land and soak up some of the rain; the rest would sink into the ground instead of running off.

In order to control floods, it is necessary to replant the land. Government workers and men in the agricultural experiment stations of the state colleges have been studying this problem for years. They have

encouraged farmers to plant trees and to cover their hillside fields with grass and clover, so that the soil will not be washed away.

The forested state and national parks in the Ohio Valley keep a great deal of water from running off into the streams. Ohio alone has 69 parks and forests covering 145,451 acres. Since people have become aware of their value, other such parks may be created.

Although replanting the river banks helps prevent floods, many years will pass before this process shows large results. There are other, more immediate, ways of controlling floods. One is the construction of flood walls along the river. They are like the dikes of Holland, which keep the ocean from submerging the lowlands. Some Ohio cities have flood walls, but the 1937 flood was so great that in most places the water poured over the walls. This happened at Lunken Airport, in Cincinnati's East End. The Little Miami River overflowed the landing field and went up into the second story of the new air terminal building.

Army engineers, who have charge of all improvements on the Ohio River, have recommended the construction of a flood wall along the Cincinnati waterfront. Their plan is to make this wall high and strong enough to withstand future floods.

Another proposed way of controlling floods is to construct locks and dams, regulating the height and swiftness of the river. After the 1913 flood a series of retaining dams was built at a cost of \$30,000,000 along the most dangerous streams in the Great Miami Valley. The project proved its worth. In the record flood of 1937, it not only protected the people along the upper Great Miami, but also gave refuge to hundreds of persons who fled from Cincinnati and other flooded areas.

A combination of the various methods of controlling floods is being worked out in the Muskingum Valley in the eastern part of Ohio. Here the Government has built a series of 14 dams and storage reservoirs at a cost of \$40,000,000. Besides, a huge area around each dam is being replanted and tended carefully. The region is already attracting tourists. Each year thousands of people come to swim, fish, boat on the lakes, camp in the forests, and look at the huge locks and dams in the Muskingum River.

All these projects are designed to control the rivers and help prevent floods. If and when floods do come, however, there is another sort of work to be done. Many families will never forget the service of the Red Cross during the 1937 flood. Red Cross workers in every community along the river gave food, clothing, and a place to sleep to thousands of people forced out of their homes by the water.

The United States Coast Guard Service maintains at Louisville the only inland Coast Guard Station in the United States. Government cutters patrol the rivers and swing into action in case of accident, flood, or other emergency. They are equipped with wireless and can radio boats near the trouble.

In the Naval Militia of the United States Navy are young men between 17 and 28 years old. They are not regular sailors; they are called out only for emergency river duty. In time of flood the Cincinnati unit rescues families marooned in flooded homes.

The Sea Scouts, a branch of the Boy Scouts, are also of great help in critical times. During the 1937 flood they carried supplies and messages. In ordinary times they learn water sports, river lore, and seamanship. They cruise the Ohio and its tributaries in troop ships manned by a skipper, mate, and boatswain, and a crew of eight boys. Just as the Boy Scouts keep the way clear at parades and civic affairs, so the Sea Scouts assist during boat races and other river events.



A THOUSAND MILES OF HIGHWAY

THE 1870's were great years for the river; it was merry with traffic. But something had happened. The railroads were building connecting lines east and west, north and south. The Southern Railroad and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, the two roads which connected Cincinnati with the South, were soon carrying most of the traffic that at one time would have traveled the Ohio.

The country no longer depended on steamboats for freight and travel, and the Ohio River was no longer considered one of the greatest natural resources of the Nation. Grass began to grow among the cobblestones of the public landings. The shipyards were idle, and when a boat sank or grew too old for service it was not replaced. Fewer barges were coming down the canals, and even some of the canals themselves were being abandoned.

Thus people along the Ohio River had another problem to solve. As they looked at the great muddy river passing their doors, they asked themselves, "What can be done to make the Ohio again a highway of trade, astir once more with packets and barges?"

Fortunately, a number of things could be done. About 1827 the Federal Government had begun to clear the river of stumps, sunken trees, and debris, that snagged ships and clogged the channel. But sand bars and ice and low water could still tie up shipping.

It is true that freight and passengers had traveled the river for years, regardless of delays and river hazards. But that was before the coming of the railroads. The train was faster and safer than the steamboat. The steamboat could not compete with the railroad train unless the river were improved. The Government had done some cleaning and dredging, but without deepening the channel enough. In 1896 Congress authorized a survey of the Ohio down to Marietta, to learn if locks and dams could be built to advantage, but it was not until 1908 that the survey was reported favorably.

In the meantime, in 1907, towboats began a revival of freight traffic on the river. During that year the *Sprague* moved 60 barges, filled with 70,000 tons of coal, from Louisville to New Orleans. This was a new phase of river commerce, and it seemed to promise a return to the good old days of shipping.



LOCK AND DAM

Courtesy of Paul Briol

Finally, in 1910, Congress passed a Rivers and Harbors Act authorizing the construction of dams from Pittsburgh to Cairo to maintain a water level of at least nine feet. Although a large amount of money was set aside, little work was done.

Then the World War came. Trade and industry were good and the railroads were worked almost beyond capacity. Once more the river became important, especially for carrying bulky freight that the railroads could not take care of at the time.

Barge fleets were already using the upper Ohio, where some locks and dams had been completed. The Ohio Valley Improvement Association renewed its efforts for construction of locks and dams on the rest of the Ohio, and in 1923 secured another appropriation from Congress. Under the supervision of the United States Army Engineers, 47 dams costing \$121,000,000 were completed in October 1929. When the work was finished, Herbert Hoover, then President of the United States, went down the river. In Eden Park at Cincinnati he dedicated a monument commemorating the completion of the dams.

The Ohio had become a fine new river. Low water, the summer bane of the riverman, no longer kept boats idle, nor was ice a great danger in winter. Shipping was safer and cheaper.

Since the War, sand and gravel for building purposes have been greatly in demand, and large quantities have been dredged from the river bed. Other important products carried by river boats are iron, steel, petroleum products, cement, lumber, and coal. Although other

THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER

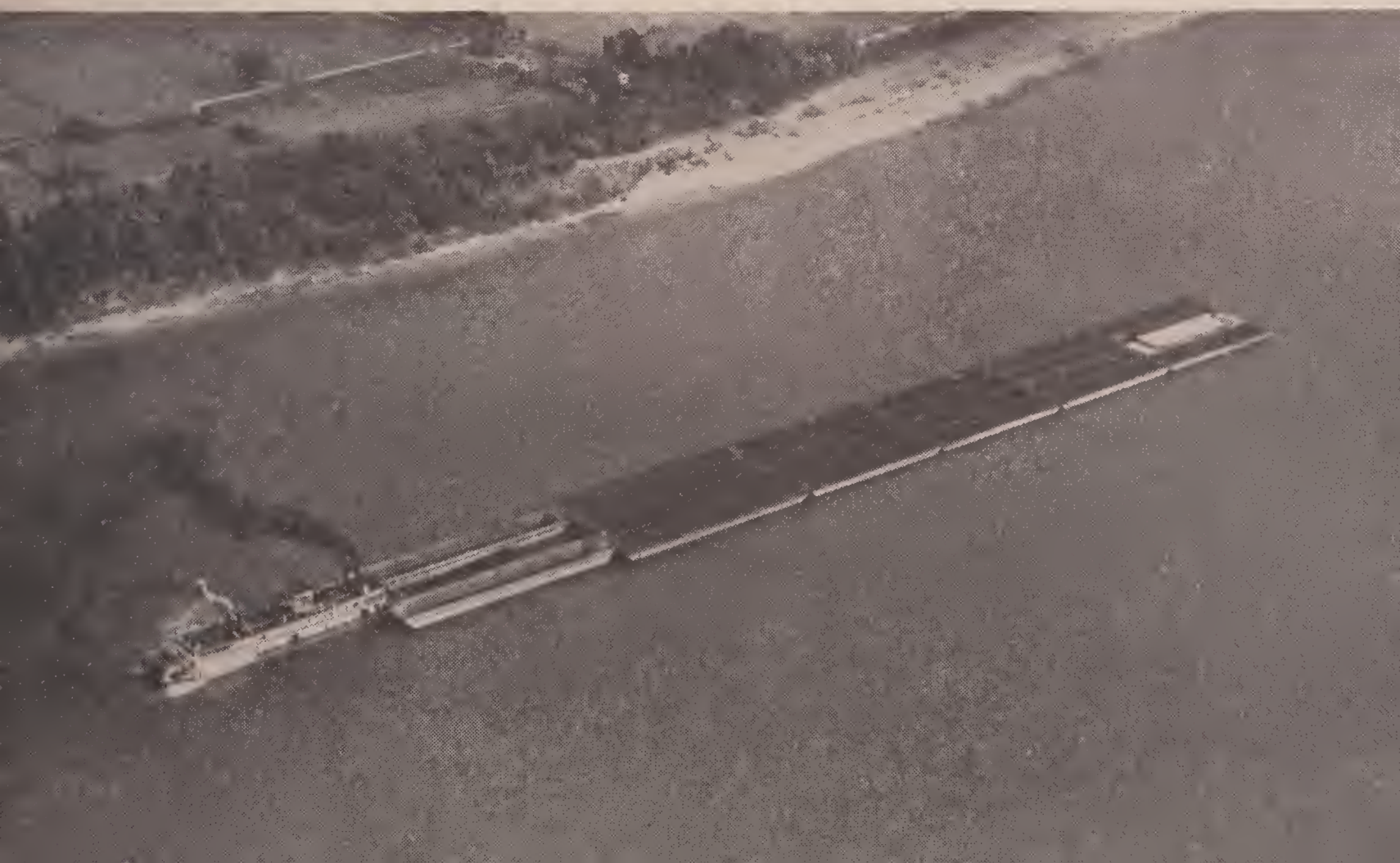
industries have moved away from the river, the coal yards of the river towns remain near the river bank. Cincinnati, which handles millions of tons of coal each year, is one of the greatest coal distributing points in the United States.

Along with the revival of freight shipping on the Ohio has come an increase in passenger service. Of course people now travel the river not for business or through necessity, but for fun. They come from far places for a steamboat trip on a part of the 2,300 navigable miles of the Ohio and its tributaries. In February, passenger boats make the trip to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras. Throughout the summer there are regular passenger excursions to places all along the Ohio. The most popular trips are those of the *Island Queen* to and from Coney Island, the amusement park on Cincinnati's eastern limits 10 miles up river from the Public Landing.

Many people have gay times paddling and sailing canoes or small boats, and racing motorboats on the river. The motorboat races of the Ohio Valley Motor Boat Racing Association and the sailboat races of the Cincinnati Sailing Club take place before enthusiastic crowds who watch from the river banks and the bridges. The most exciting races on the river in recent years were those between the steamboats *Betsy Ann* and *Chris Greene* and *Tom Greene*. In the 21-mile race with the *Chris Greene*, in July 1928, the *Betsy Ann* lost by a quarter-mile. In a similar race with the *Tom Greene* the following summer, it lost by less than 35 feet. The next year the *Tom Greene* won un-

Courtesy of American Airlines, Inc.

NEW TRAFFIC



disputed supremacy of the river, outdistancing the *Betsy Ann* by four miles over a 20-mile course.

Footloose people live in houseboats or "shantyboats" all year round. They go up and down the river as the spirit moves them, and fish or gather mussel shells to sell to button manufacturers. In the summer and early fall they tie up their boats along the Ohio; then when winter approaches they cut loose from their mooring and float down river to the Mississippi and the warm South. Shantyboatmen are easy-going and happy, and find pleasure enough in tying up under a sycamore tree and lazing away the days on the deck of their boat with fishing line in the water. They live a carefree life. They have no rent to pay, and they can get enough to eat by fishing in the river or by visiting the truck gardens and cornfields of the river farmers.

The shantyboat is usually a crudely built, flatbottomed boat with a cabin of clapboards and tin, and is something like the ark used by the pioneer except that the ark was much larger and heavier.

Less than 20 years ago more than a thousand summer camps lay between New Richmond and Cincinnati. But the widening of the river slowed the current; the water became so foul from sewage that many fish died and it became necessary to pass an ordinance prohibiting swimming in the river. However, people still camp in the wooded places on the Ohio, and along the banks of the two Miamis, the Licking, and other streams.

It is still possible to take a packet trip the full length of the Ohio—down the great sweeping curves of the river, past the mouths of the little rivers, and around the Ohio's hundred green islands. Some of the islands are very small, less than a half-mile long. Most of them are lived on and farmed. Two of them, Buffington and Blennerhassett, are famous. At Buffington, in July 1863, a number of John Morgan's raiders, who had dashed up from Kentucky to worry and plunder the towns of Indiana and Ohio, were surrounded by Union forces and captured. After it was all over, the soldiers were tired and dusty. The day was hot, and the water inviting. War was suddenly forgotten. Men of both sides threw off their uniforms and plunged gleefully into the river for a swim together.

Around the other famous Ohio River island, Blennerhassett, centers the story of an Irish aristocrat and his beautiful wife. They bought 170 acres of the island, built a house, planted crops, and pottered around in their formal gardens. They were happy on their island paradise until the day in 1805 when Aaron Burr came to tempt them. Burr lured Blennerhassett into giving him money for his dreamy plan

of setting up an empire in the Southwest. The scheme failed, and late in 1806 President Jefferson ordered the arrest of Blennerhassett and Burr, charged with treason against the United States. After a court trial, they were freed. Blennerhassett's troubles were not over. He had one misfortune after the other. A few years later, he died.

People who have not lived with the river always ask why the Ohio is so celebrated for its beauty. Today, of course, it is not altogether *La Belle Rivière* marveled at by explorers and pioneers; people have changed its color and its uses. But it still flows in a pleasant valley among green and brown hills. From Pittsburgh to Cairo, for a thousand miles, it is still the beautiful river on its way to join the Mississippi and travel with it to the sea.

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